

SIMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND  
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But the prejudiced, the purblind, and the foolish, the hundreds of so-called critics who had glanced at his novels but had never perused a line of the essays in which he enunciated his principles, responded by accusing him of a degraded partiality for filth, of wallowing in mire, because such was his favourite element. The sensation created by "L'Assommoir" had been great, that which attended the production of "Nana" was perhaps greater.

Much of the year 1878 was spent by Zola in making preparations for that book. Incredible as it may seem, his critics have actually reproached him for his previous ignorance of the "successful" Parisian courtesan. His knowledge of her had certainly been limited to her out-door life; like others he had seen her, elbowed her at the theatres, in the Bois, and at other places of public resort. That was all. He therefore applied to friends and acquaintances for information. Edmond de Goncourt, who had repeatedly dined at the table of La Paiiva<sup>1</sup> before she became the wife of Henckel von Donnersmarck, gave him a variety of information; Ludovic HaleVy initiated him into the *d&ini-*

<sup>1</sup> This woman had an extraordinary career. She was of German origin, her real name being Theresa Lachmann, but she was born in Russia, and first married a French tailor of Moscow, named Villoing. After eloping with. Here, the well-known pianist, she entered the Parisian, *demi-*

*monde* under the  
auspices of the notorious Esther Guimond. Finding herself  
in, difficulties  
she proceeded to London, fascinated and half-ruined a member  
of au. English,  
ducal house, returned to Paris, ruined several French nobles  
there, and ulti-  
mately married Yiscount Armijo de Paiiva of the Portuguese  
Legation, whom  
she also ruined and who committed suicide. Though her  
beauty, which had  
been great, was then fading, she captivated Count Henckel  
von Donnersmarck,  
a connection of the Bismarck family, and he ended by  
marrying her. She  
lived in a magnificent mansion in the Champs Elyse'es  
adorned by Baudry,  
Cabaue, Gerfirne, and Cldsinger; and Girardin, Gautier,  
About, Ponsard,  
Augier, Houssaye, and Goncourt wore familiars of her  
drawing-room. She  
died in 1884 on her husband's estate in Silesia.